

lar. On the first appearance of the menses, they are furnished with provisions, and sent into the woods, to remain concealed for two days; for they have a superstition, that if a man should be seen or met with during that time, death will be the consequence. At the end of the second day, the woman is permitted to return to the lodge, when she is placed in a hut just large enough for her to lie in at full length, in which she is compelled to remain for twenty days, cut off from all communication with her friends, and is obliged to hide her face at the appearance of a man. After this she is required to perform repeated ablutions before she can resume her place in the family. At every return, the women go into seclusion for two or three days."

It is strange that a superstitious feeling with regard to the menstrual discharge, should have been universal among all nations; we find it noticed in the earliest records of the human race, and always in the same manner; being considered as something noxious, and as exercising a baneful influence on the male sex. The seclusion of the female during the continuance of her monthly discharge was as strictly enjoined by the Mosaic law, as by those of the Egyptians, or other nations of the old continent; and we find that the same regulation existed throughout the savage tribes of America. An investigation of this subject, if productive of no absolute benefit, would be extremely interesting; there must have been some cause for this universal dread of what is now looked upon as a salutary exertion and one essential to the health of the female.

The last extract we shall make is an account of a singular custom among the Nez Percés, as showing the wonderful power of the stomach in resisting the most powerful irritations. To enable themselves to endure fatigue, they prepare themselves as follows: "On the first day three or four willow sticks, eighteen inches in length, are thrust down the throat to induce vomiting; a hole is then prepared of a sufficient depth for a man to sit upright, with his head above the ground. On the second day, other sticks of an eighth of an inch in diameter, and of a length to reach from the mouth to the umbilicus, are passed down, and this process is continued until a burning sensation is produced in the stomach, the number of the sticks being diminished as the throat becomes sore; after this the patient plunges into cold water and remains there until evening, when he takes half a pint of porridge. On the third day he undergoes the same process. During the next four days he alternately takes hot and cold baths, eating very sparingly. This trying operation is commenced at the age of eighteen and is continued annually until about forty. The most remarkable circumstance is, that it would appear that this treatment is efficacious, and that instead of destroying those subjected to it, they are remarkable for their bodily powers." In these days of quackery, it will doubtless be adopted among us, and have as many followers as animal magnetism, hydrosudopathy or other modes of filling the pockets of the charlatan at the expense of his dupes.

We must now take our leave of these agreeable and instructive volumes, which will amply repay the reader, by the variety and importance of the information they contain,—narrated in a clear and unambitious style. The elegance with which they are got up both as regards their typography and their numerous illustrations, far excels any thing that has yet issued from the American press, and reflects infinite credit on the country. We look with much interest for the reports of the scientific corps, trusting that they will soon be laid before the public, in an equally magnificent manner.

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ART. XIV.—*An Essay on the Philosophy of Medical Science.* By ELISHA BARTLETT, M. D., Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine in the University of Maryland. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1844: 8vo., pp. 310.

ESSAYS on the philosophy of Medical Science are as valuable now as they have been in earlier periods of the history of medicine. Notwithstanding many discoveries, and although the means of exploration and the number of medical agents are being constantly increased by them, we have still to lament that a

blind empiricism prevails very widely, and that a considerable portion of the community seek for relief from disease and suffering from popular nostrums, and at the hands of practitioners who know not, and who, in their ignorance, despise the beaten paths of science and of art. In view of these facts, it is customary to dwell at large on the credulity of human nature and its love of the marvelous, and we must admit, that all this is concerned with the state of things to be deplored. Other causes however, such as the imperfections of our art, and the mistakes of its professors, are more profitable subjects for consideration, inasmuch as we have more control over them, and if we but learn how to proceed, we can labour to remove them.

Dr. Bartlett's book, then, seems to us to have been published very opportunely. He professes to discuss the imperfections of our science, which are attributable to an erroneous method employed by those who have sought to advance it. His reputation as an experienced practitioner and teacher of medicine, gives us assurance that his views must be those of a practical man, and that his opinions will not be crude, nor his ideas hastily thrown together.

That all physical science consists in ascertained facts, phenomena or events, the whole classified and arranged, is the first proposition maintained by Dr. Bartlett. He very properly begins with physical science and devotes to it the first part of his essay. What is true of physical science in general, must be true also of medical science, and the proper method of pursuing them both must be the same. One unacquainted with the history of medicine, might doubt the necessity of writing a treatise, the main object of which, is to illustrate and defend so obvious a truth as is contained in the above proposition, and yet it is undeniable, that practically, medical men have wandered widely from the course in which respect for that truth would have compelled them to proceed. Instead of using those faculties of observation which were given man to enable him to find out the laws which govern the universe, so called philosophers have been in the habit at all periods, of resorting to other faculties, and calling fancy and imagination to their aid, and of displaying their ingenuity in the invention of processes and mechanical contrivances. Physiologists have given us any number of hypotheses, and have set forth at great length, and with great complacency, how all the functions of the economy can be carried on and sustained, and have not even stopped, where they were obliged to confess their ignorance of the structure of important organs. The powers of imagination, and the ingenuity displayed by pathologists in their expedients for producing the phenomena of disease are equally remarkable. How many and how various the hypotheses, according to which, the phenomena of continued fever may be produced! Creation, after all, would not be so wonderful an exercise of power, if we could believe that all the processes of the economy, in health, and in disease, could be carried on in such numerous and various ways as are described in the writings of physiologists and pathologists. It is surprising that so many people die in spite of the many and infallible remedies, the efficacy of which is vouched for by witnesses so positive and so confident. It is often told of Newton, that he once spoke of himself as a child gathering a few pebbles on the shore of the great ocean of truth, and we could wish that such humility characterized more frequently the writings of scientific men. There are some writers, who have even gone so far as to maintain that observation is but an inferior exercise of the intellectual powers, and they attempt to describe a mode of reasoning out truth, which they hold up as nobler and higher than the patient and continued endeavour to look into life as it is. It is related of John Hunter, that he was once seen by his servant, standing for hours over a subject, without change of posture, a scalpel in one hand, pressing on the body, and lost in thought, in an endeavour to understand the mechanism of certain organs which he had been examining. Such an earnest gazing at truth cannot be a favourite method with the writers to whom we have alluded. With them, imagination leaps at results and devises processes by a sort of inspiration, with infinitely less labour. Such men evidently aspire to the possession of creative powers, and seem to have listened to the suggestion made by the great enemy of man to our first parents, "Ye shall be as gods." They scorn patient labour, and certainly can possess none of that humility and reverence for which all successful seekers after truth have been remarkable. Surely, we need hardly apolo-

gize for thus glancing at the obliquity of man's moral nature as an obstacle to the advancement of truth, for how can we otherwise account for the many instances in medical works, of an obstinacy that will not see the right, and of a deliberate preference for error and falsehood. Some statement of this kind is the more necessary, because there are writers who attribute to all advocates of the use of numbers in medical science, an opinion that the numerical system is a sort of machine which is to set all things right, by the use of which error and mistake become impossible, the necessity for intellectual exertion is removed, and no occasion is offered for the exercise of the higher faculties of our nature. We will not deny that there are some who have written on the subject so as to lay themselves open to such a charge, but Dr. Bartlett cannot be placed in their number.

In his essay, the numerical system is spoken of as an instrument to aid in the pursuit of truth—the use of which is to be learnt only by the study and persevering employment of the higher faculties; and which, in the hands of the ignorant, the incapable and the dishonest, may mislead and deceive only the more from the appearance of exactness borne on the face of its results. And what Dr. Bartlett has said on this subject, would have made more impression on certain minds, had he recognized more clearly the existence of intuitive powers, by which truth is often discerned, sometimes dimly and at a distance, before it can be shown to others, in such a way as to produce conviction. Sir Isaac Newton, in his meditation on the fall of the apple, saw the principle of gravitation, and, as it were, partly by its light, worked out laws and principles which were more fully developed to the world in the *Principia*. We certainly believe that in medicine such a course has not been unfrequent. In our own day, for instance, the incident and reflex actions of the nervous system have been fully set forth by Dr. Marshall Hall, though their existence was recognized by Whytt and other earlier observers. The connection of pericarditis with rheumatism was noticed in the latter part of the last century, but a great deal has been done within a few years to throw light on the subject and to give certainty to our knowledge. John Hunter seems to have had glimpses of many truths which have been established and demonstrated by subsequent observers. This faculty, however, of discerning the truth is comparatively a rare gift. Most of us must be content to arrive at truth by a more circuitous and less direct route. In fact, there are few who are not more or less in danger of mistaking what they imagine for what they see, and of reporting to others as facts the fictions of their fancy. Mental obliquity is not a very rare disease, nor is a perfectly achromatic mental lens at the service of every man. The process of generalization is not safe for the many who endeavour to use it. A writer in a recent number of a popular review on the subject of education, who claims only to re-collect and re-present old truths, says, “that many people seem to think that all knowledge consists in acquiring and using certain abstract ideas, which, after all, is no knowledge at all, for God and nature gave us no such things to study. They are but the spider's web of our own brain.” We cannot go far in the history of medicine without finding confirmation of the justice of this remark. Cullen and Brown certainly were men of no ordinary intellectual powers, and yet must not their theories of fever be considered as abstract ideas which existed only in their own minds, and which, having been mistaken for the truth, have exercised a pernicious influence on the practice of medical men? Broussais, in his later years, with his abstract ideas of irritation and inflammation, which were the cause of such a profuse expenditure of blood, affords another example, and Dr. Bartlett very properly dwells on his history at some length. The theories of Gallup and Miner and Thompson, and those of the disciples of Hahnemann are instances in our own country of a generalization resulting in abstract ideas of disease to the infinite prejudice of patients. Now will any question the utility of dwelling on mistakes which have been and are so frequently committed? Shall there not be, as it were, charts of medical science, on which shall be marked distinctly the rocks and quicksands that have been fatal to many a voyager? We may regard Dr. Bartlett's essay in this light—all the branches of medical science, anatomy, chemistry, physiology, pathology, therapeutics are reviewed by him, and he endeavours to show their connection and how far one branch may be said to be founded on another. Two chapters are devoted to diagnosis, one chapter is taken up with a discussion of the principles of classification

of diseases, and in the concluding chapter are discussed the future prospects of medical science, the probable extent of our power over disease, the American French and English schools of observation. It is apparent even from so brief and imperfect a statement of the contents of Dr. Bartlett's book, how much ground he goes over. It is not our purpose to follow him, nor to criticise minutely the views and opinions advanced by him. To do this, and to be just to the subject and the author, would not be possible in the prescribed limits. We can only imitate the traveler, who, after the completion of his tour, commits to writing some of the impressions produced on his own mind, with the thoughts suggested to him by the scenes and circumstances amongst which he has been thrown. Our readers may perhaps judge in this way as easily, whether it be worth their while to go over the same ground as after a more elaborate description. Of course, all will not find that Dr. Bartlett has surveyed the field of medical science from their own favourite points of view. His volume is but an octavo of some three hundred pages, and such a subject as the philosophy of medical science cannot be exhausted in that space. Yet whatever faults of omission or commission may be detected by the critical reader, we are persuaded that no man of an honest or candid mind will regret the time spent in making himself acquainted with the author's views. No one can proceed far in the perusal of the work without being convinced that the writer has thought much and well, and has expressed himself clearly and forcibly. The book is a credit to the medical literature of our country, and for the sake of the profession we hope that it will meet with a wide circulation.

G. C. S.

ART. XV.—*General Report of the Royal Hospitals of Bridewell and Bethlem, and of the House of Occupations, for the year ending 31st December, 1844.* London, 1845: pp. 112.

DURING the last few years the Bethlem Hospital for the Insane has made gigantic strides in the way of improvement. It now undoubtedly deserves to be classed among the very best of pauper institutions for the treatment of mental disorders. The extended notice which we gave of the report for 1843 precludes the necessity of entering at length into the details of that which is now before us. The following table includes the most important statistics for the year:

	CURABLES.			INCURABLES.			CRIMINALS.			TOTALS.		
	Males.	Females.	Total.	Males.	Females.	Total.	Males.	Females.	Total.	Males.	Females.	Total.
In hospital January 1st, 1844, - -	72	109	181	34	50	84	70	20	90	176	179	355
Admitted during the year, - - -	118	163	280	5	3	8	10	1	11	133	172	305
Whole number, - - - - -	190	277	467	39	53	92	80	21	101	309	351	660
Discharged cured, - - - - -	58	70	128	0	0	0	2	2	4	60	72	132
Died, - - - - -	6	13	19	1	3	4	5	0	5	12	16	28
Remaining December 31st, 1844, -	77	114	191	37	50	87	73	19	92	187	183	370
Patients admitted during 100 years, ending Dec. 31st, 1843, 17,803.												
“ discharged cured, “ “ “ “							7,108, or 39·86 pr. ct.					
“ died, “ “ “ “							1,799, or 10·10 pr. ct.					
Curable cases admitted during the last 25 years, -							Males.	Females.	Totals.			
“ cured “ “ “ -							2,180	3,221	5,408			
“ died “ “ “ -							1,021	1,715	2,736			
							132	146	278			
Per centum of cures, - - - - -							46·83	53·12	50·59			
“ of deaths, - - - - -							6·05	4·52	5·12			

Hence it appears that the recoveries, in cases considered as curable, was a fraction more than 50 per cent. The question is often asked, whether the patients of one sex are more curable than those of the other? The cures of females, according to this table, exceeded those of males by 6·29 per cent.